

A LEVEL

Candidate Style Answers

FILM STUDIES

H410

For first teaching in 2017

H410/02 Critical approaches to film

Version 1

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Introduction

Please note that this resource is provided for advice and guidance only and does not in any way constitute an indication of grade boundaries or endorsed answers. Whilst a senior examiner has provided a possible level for each Assessment Objective when marking these answers, in a live series the mark a response would get depends on the whole process of standardisation, which considers the big picture of the year's scripts. Therefore the level awarded here should be considered to be only an estimation of what would be awarded. How levels and marks correspond to grade boundaries depends on the Awarding process that happens after all/most of the scripts are marked and depends on a number of factors, including candidate performance across the board. Details of this process can be found here: <http://ocr.org.uk/Images/142042-marking-and-grading-assuring-ocr-accuracy.pdf>

The sample assessment material used in this resource is here: <http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/316670-unit-h410-02-critical-approaches-to-film-sample-assessment-material.pdf>

SECTION A QUESTION 2

SECTION A – Contemporary British and US Film

Answer **either** Question 1 **or** Question 2

You should have studied **one** British film and **one** US film from the lists below.

British	US
<i>Pride</i> (2014). Directed by Matthew Warchus. Britain, 15	<i>Guardians of the Galaxy</i> (2014). Directed by James Gunn. USA, 12
<i>Gone Too Far</i> (2013). Directed by Destiny Ekaragha. Britain, 12	<i>The Hunger Games</i> (2012). Directed by Gary Ross. USA, 15
<i>Ex Machina</i> (2014). Directed by Alex Garland. Britain, 15	<i>Star Wars: The Force Awakens</i> (Abrams 2015). Directed by J.J. Abrams. USA, 12
<i>The Angel's Share</i> (2012). Directed by Ken Loach. Britain, 15	<i>The Dark Knight Rises</i> (2012). Directed by Christopher Nolan. USA. 12
<i>We Need to Talk About Kevin</i> (2011). Directed by Lynne Ramsay. Britain, 15	<i>Zootopia</i> (2016). Directed by Rich Moore, Jared Bush, Byron Howard. USA, PG
<i>Skyfall</i> (2012). Directed by Sam Mendes. Britain, 12	<i>Jurassic World</i> (2015). Directed by Colin Trevorrow. USA, 12

- 2 'In the context of the film production process, it does not make sense to talk about the director as the film's auteur.' Discuss how valid this view is in relation to examples from **one British** film and **one US** film you have studied.

[35]

Exemplar 1 – Level 5 answer, 33 marks

In this essay I will be discussing the films 'Star Wars: The Force Awakens' (Abrams, 2015) and 'Ex-Machina' (Garland, 2014). I will explore the narrative structures of both films in reference to the critical approaches of auteur and genre. In the process, I will be seeking to demonstrate my broad agreement with the claim made in the question.

Auteur theory has many theoretical exponents and has become a major critical approach to understanding what and how films seek to communicate to their audiences. The French critic Alexandre Astruc was one of the first theorists to identify the director as the auteur - the author of meaning in a film. He wrote of using the camera in the same way a writer uses a pen - le camera stylo - and how the director expresses their authorial intent through how they shape the film. This approach became widely accepted in the years after World War 2, as critics and directors such as Truffaut and Godard, leaders of the French New Wave, advanced this theory.

With 'Star Wars: The Force Awakens', you have a film which is directed by a major, successful film and TV director in JJ Abrams - who co-created 'Lost' and revitalised the 'Star Trek' film franchise. On the surface then, it would seem he had considerable room to put his authorial control on the film, but there are other factors at work which I think prevent Abrams from being seen as the film's auteur. Firstly, to state the obvious, this film is the seventh Star Wars film, with the first film having been made 40 years ago. Since the first film in 1977, there have been a further five films and a whole fictional world weaved into comics and novels since the early 1980s onwards. The first film's success led to huge sales of merchandising and helped to build an extensive and loyal fan-base.

The original films, the characters and themes explored in the comics and novels and the second wave of films in the late 90s and early 00s were all the creative brainchild of George Lucas. He directed the first film and the wave of 90s/00s sequels and had significant creative input into The Empire Strikes Back and Return of the Jedi. So in one sense, because TFA exists within the same fictional universe as all these other texts, George Lucas is the real auteur; with the return of fan favourite characters such as Luke, Leia, Han Solo, Chewbacca, C3PO and R2D2 in TFA, the return of Lucas's original vision for this world is made clear, limiting Abrams's creative input.

In addition, there are two other big factors - the Disney takeover of Lucasfilm and the power of the audience themselves. Lucas announced plans for sequels to the original 70s/80s films at the time of the production of Episodes 1-3 which were prequels to the original films. While the films were financially successful, there was mixed reactions by the fans - particularly to A Phantom Menace (dubbed too childish) and Attack of the Clones. The plans for the sequels disappeared off the radar. After Lucas decided to sell Lucasfilm to Disney, it was at this point when the sequels were revived as a concept - a decision driven by Disney's desire to maximise revenue through the power of their newly acquired property. They wanted new films which would please existing fans, the better to sell them new merchandise and rides at Disney parks. Disney's approach recognised the role and power of fans - their desire to have what they loved is arguably the most potent tool in shaping the direction of the new films, limiting the creative control of the director. There are some considerable overlaps between the first film - A New Hope and TFA. An article I read from Entertainment Weekly pointed out a number of similarities. For example both films have a droid carrying valuable information - R2D2 in the first film, BB2 in the new one - with both droids looking and behaving in similar ways. Both films feature an antagonist who is alert to the 'Force' - Darth Vader is mirrored now by his grandson Kylo Ren - not just by bloodline but by appearance with black cloaks and black masks obscuring the face and distorting the voice. Both films feature young characters, predominantly dressed in white, who are adrift from society, who finds that 'the Force' is with them - Luke in the first film, Rey in the new film. Both films culminate with an extremely risky attack on the main base of the forces of evil, both attacks led by young, confident pilots - Luke in the first film and Poe Dameron in the new film.

The structure of the narrative and the type of characters featured are strikingly similar between the two films. This raises the question of why the successful director JJ Abrams wasn't more daring and more inventive - he has shown himself to be capable previously, particularly with the innovative TV drama 'Lost'. My belief is that Disney - the big studio in the mix - would have given Abrams some parameters to work inside, such as what I outlined earlier, and so this curtailed his potential to be a director-auteur. Also, Abrams had previously demonstrated his capacity to get a franchise 'back to basics' as he had done with 'Star Trek' in 2009 - re-working to get back to the characters and relationships of the original TV series - so he had demonstrated his ability to give major studios what they want: successful products which please audiences. Here the director's authorial voice is subordinate to the requirements of the studio and the franchise's pre-existing characters and narrative tropes.

By contrast, 'Ex-Machina' has a very different production context and thus would be much richer grounds for identifying Alex Garland as the director-auteur. 'Ex-Machina' is a non-studio production (it was produced by Film 4) and is an original concept, not a sequel or part of a pre-existing universe. The film had a small budget - director Garland was restricted to a maximum of three takes per shot for budget reasons. The director also wrote the script, so this looks like prime auteurist material. Without doubt, it is an original and thoughtful film, but one which is heavily influenced by forerunners in the genre. It is a science

fiction film, and shows much of the conventional concerns of the genre in its running time. One of the key themes of sci-fi, from Mary Shelley's novel Frankenstein onwards, is the theme of fear of technology in the wrong hands and the powers of science being abused by reckless individuals. The creation of new waves of AI human-like robots brings this theme to the forefront of the film. Nathan demonstrates himself to be an extremely skilled inventor, something we become progressively aware of as we see the extent of his developmental work on Ava. His desire to create the perfect AI, with an eye on his reputation and wealth, at the expense of any moral concerns means the spectator has to work out where they stand on the possibility of AI robots so lifelike that they are indiscernible from humans. One of the final shots of the film, where we see Ava's shadow on the floor alongside shadows of 'real people', hints towards this blurring of lines.

By the end of the film, it is incredibly hard to tell the difference between human and AI. The film's narrative partly focuses on how Caleb is trying to test Ava to discover how effective her AI is - how close to human responses to his questions can she get? This is strikingly similar to the Voight-Kampff Test used in 'Blade Runner' - which was designed to test whether the subject was human or replicant (AI). So, in addition to the conventional sci-fi territory of technology in the wrong hands, the question of what it means to be human is also a strong element to the narrative of this film, again showing the influence of genre on the production process. The dominance of sci-fi conventions on the narrative suggests that the director cannot be seen simply as the film's auteur, similarly to the impact of established conventions in TFA.

With Nathan and Ava's desire to make Ava as human as possible, the film also veers onto the territory of another film and another classic story, demonstrating the influence of established narratives and conventions. The film is Spielberg's AI and the classic tale is Pinocchio - both of which featured a character who wanted to be a real boy. Nathan and Ava seemingly want Ava to be a real girl - or so close that the difference cannot be identified.

So, while I think the film is an excellent science fiction film it cannot escape the restrictions of genre conventions. For the creative control that Garland could exercise - he wrote the story, picked the actors and chose how to film the script - his ability to be the central author is hemmed in by genre conventions.

To conclude, whatever the production context of the film, it is very difficult to credibly see the director as being the sole author in either TFA or Ex-Machina due to the influence of genre, so I agree with the statement in the question.

Examiner commentary

What went well: The candidate has a very clear knowledge and understanding of the chosen films and of their production contexts. A number of points about both films are offered, so this is a clearly relevant, sustained and sophisticated response which is able to link together points about production contexts and how this impacts on the film themselves. Also, by drawing on the critical approaches of auteur theory and genre theory, the candidate demonstrates both a breadth and depth of understanding. In the course of the answer, there is a high frequency of film terminology, which is all accurately used.

Overall, the candidate offers a very comprehensive response with some comparison between the two films. There is a well-developed and detailed line of reasoning which is coherent and logically structured. The information presented is entirely relevant and substantiated.

Even better if: Some further use of examples from the films would be helpful to further substantiate the points made.

Mark awarded 33/35: This response clearly fits the criteria for Level 5 – comprehensive analysis of relevant examples, excellent response at this level.

AO1 14/15, AO2 19/20

Exemplar 2 – Level 3 answer, 16 marks

In this essay I will be discussing the films 'Star Wars: The Force Awakens' (Abrams, 2015) and 'Ex-Machina' (Garland, 2014). I will explore both films in relation to the critical approaches of auteur and genre to demonstrate my disagreement with the statement in the question.

With 'Star Wars: The Force Awakens', you have a film which is directed by a major, successful film and TV director in JJ Abrams - who co-created 'Lost' and revitalised the 'Star Trek' film franchise. Such a director would be expected to have a lot of creative control, and with JJ Abrams being a Star Wars fan, he knew the fans wanted the old characters back and not newer characters like Jar-Jar Binks. So, this film sees the return of the heroes of the first Star Wars films, Episodes 4 to 6.

Abrams has taken the ingredients of a good Star Wars film and updated it for the modern era. Han Solo and Leia are now the grown up adults and characters which the younger ones look up to, and now have to worry about their son Kylo Ren who has become trapped with the Dark Side of the Force. So the film has new heroes (Finn and Rey) mixed with the old ones. Abrams has also realised that humour is important - and the new character BB2 is the new R2D2.

The new film was produced by Disney, but this isn't like watching a Disney film, which is another reason for seeing JJ Abrams as the auteur. Though the genre conventions of the film may put some limits on his control as the narrative is what you would expect in a Star Wars film.

'Ex-Machina' is an independent production (Film 4) which may give the director more control than a studio film. The director, Alex Garland, also wrote the script, so he could definitely be seen as the auteur. In some ways, this is like a modern day Blade Runner because one of the film's main themes is the question over what does it mean to be human, which shows the influence of other films in the genre. This might show the director is less important. Ava becomes more and more human as the film progresses and Caleb begins to doubt whether he is human - when he tries pulling his teeth out and cuts his arm to see if there's metal and wires inside. This sequence is an example of the director's individual creative vision as it is quite distinctive.

To conclude then, to some degree the director is the auteur, but there are other factors as well.

Examiner commentary

What went well: The candidate has some adequate knowledge and understanding of the chosen films and is able to raise relevant point about both films. The line of reasoning is presented with some structure.

Even better if: Some further use of examples from the films would be helpful to further substantiate the points made and to give greater credibility to the argument presented. More examples would give the candidate a greater opportunity to make links to relevant critical approaches in a more substantial fashion than is evident here.

Mark awarded 16/35: With some adequate analysis of relevant examples, this is a low Level 3 response.

AO1 7/15, AO2 9/20

SECTION B QUESTION 4

SECTION B – Documentary

Answer **either** Question 3 **or** Question 4

You should have studied **one** documentary film from the list below

Documentary
<i>The Stories we Tell</i> (2013). Directed by Sarah Polley, 12
<i>Searching for Sugarman</i> (2012). Directed by Malik Bendjelloul, 12
<i>5 Broken Cameras</i> (2011). Directed by Emad Burnat, Guy Davidi, 15
<i>The Act of Killing</i> (2012). Directed by Joshua Oppenheimer, 15
<i>Man on Wire</i> (2008). Directed by James Marsh, 12
<i>Citizenfour</i> (2014). Directed by Laura Poitras, 15

'The power of a documentary film relies on techniques that make it feel as real and as truthful as possible.' Discuss this in relation to examples from the documentary film you have studied.

[35]

Exemplar 1 – Level 5 answer, 32 marks

Whether or not the power of a documentary relies on techniques that make it feel real and truthful is very much dependent on what type of documentary it is, as not all documentaries work in the same way. I am going to be writing about the documentary 'Citizenfour' (Poitras, 2014) and I will seek to argue that the power of this documentary film comes partly from the use of film techniques but also partly from the subject matter.

I think that 'Citizenfour' is a documentary which blends elements of the expository and observational styles, with a distinct authorial element. It is an expository documentary because it directly addresses its audience primarily through the recurring off-screen narration, which is presumably the voice of the director, as the narrator is female and talks in the first person. This first person approach lends it the authorial element - this is not pretending to be a fly on the wall documentary where the role of the filmmaker is to be obscured to the audience. It is also an observational documentary due to its attempt to capture the nature of Snowden's mind-set in the days he spent in a hotel in Hong Kong divulging his knowledge to select journalists. It also uses the visual language of fiction films - in some ways it apes the spy film conventions of the globetrotting that we see in the James Bond and Jason Bourne films. The action of the film is divided between Brazil, America, Hong Kong, Germany and Russia.

In terms of the techniques that the film uses to convey a sense of reality, I am going to draw from a range of examples to identify how this happens. While the majority of the film is focused on the days spent by Snowden in the hotel in Hong Kong where he is sharing his story with some journalists while trying to avoid ones he hasn't decided he can trust, the early part of the film takes time to build up some context in order to understand the gravity of the Snowden revelations. In the first 20 minutes of the film the filmmakers give us actuality footage from a range of settings: presentations to

different audiences by different speakers spelling out the range and nature of the NSA's data collection activities; a court case in Arizona where the US government is trying to stop the case from being heard while individual citizens are attempting to find out why the government has been intercepting their emails - even when there is no threat to national security. We are also presented with footage of remote buildings which are described as being part of the NSA network of data farms. We are also shown actuality footage of a senior military officer testifying to the US Congress and explicitly denying that American agencies do the type of data harvesting which Snowden exposes, which has subsequently become accepted as the truth. All of these elements are drawn from reality and most of which would not be the filmmakers' own bespoke footage for this film, but drawn from other public sources - such as the Congress testimony and courtroom footage. This lends credibility to the position of Poitras and Snowden, thus reinforcing the claim made in the statement in the question.

Furthermore, a regular feature of the film is the showing of emails and messages which have passed between Poitras and Snowden on screen and in black and white - routinely after the text has been displayed on screen long enough for the viewer to read, the text then becomes encrypted into a whole series of unintelligible symbols - showing clearly the nature of the concerns about privacy and security which Snowden evidently shares with director Poitras.

During the main body of the film, set in Snowden's hotel room in Hong Kong, we are offered handheld camera footage. This is a clear technique to show the reality of being there in the moment as the director is setting up her equipment around Snowden and journalists such as Glenn Greenwald. The handheld style has been very popular in the Bourne films directed by Paul Greengrass, whose background is in documentary and drama-documentary making.

One part during the hotel room sequence, when the fire drills are being tested in the hotel, shows us the fear and paranoia on Snowden's part as he wonders seemingly in real time what the true motivation behind this series of fire alarms is. So, the use of camera, the use of sound (through off-screen narration but also the music used throughout the film) and the range of environments depicted are all filmmaking tools which have been deliberately crafted together to ensure the viewer comes away from the film with the understanding that what they have seen is real. For me though, it is not just the filmmaking tools which enable the film to have the impact it does.

The actual subject matter and the global spread of American and other countries' agencies spying on their own people (such as GCHQ in Britain with the Tempora programme named in the film), combined with the gravitas that comes from Snowden's clear knowledge and understanding of all the things he discusses with the journalists and Poitras, are what enables this film to have a strong impact on the viewer. The revelations about the size and scale of American data harvesting and how this spreads elsewhere - including the revelations about Americans spying on the German Chancellor and exposing the 'dirty secret' that all US drone strikes are routed through the Rammstein air base in Germany. The care which Snowden takes to conceal his privacy, such as wearing the 'cloak of invisibility' to stop the camera from picking up what he is typing into his laptop at one point, help to punch home the message that privacy in the digital world is at a premium.

Having grown up with the internet all around us, and having things like smartphones and laptops, we have come to see these tools as our friends - but Snowden's revelations in this film show us that this is not the case and that in some ways we have become prisoners to the devices which so many of us love. Snowden's understanding of the dire consequences for his personal life and career, yet his resolution to expose what he believes to be wrongdoing by the American government and our own government is highly commendable. I exited the film feeling shocked and much more knowledgeable about privacy; this comes from the way the film has been constructed as a whole but also through how Snowden is given the room to explain all of his points in detail. This is a key advantage in furthering understanding compared to watching a short news interview with him.

Overall, careful use of film techniques provides the stylistic base to explore the substance of Snowden's cataloguing of the crimes of the American government. But without the substance of such a weighty and important issue, all the style in the world wouldn't be able to compensate for a lack of a substantial story.

Examiner commentary

What went well: The candidate has a very clear knowledge and understanding of the chosen film and is very able to answer the question on its own terms, finding room for debate and extension beyond the stimulus of the statement in the question. In doing so, they are showing their ability to apply the range of their knowledge and understanding of the film to the parameters set by the chosen question. The answer shows an understanding of the documentary form and is able to situate this film within aspects of that and substantiate it with clear reference to examples in the film. The candidate is able to offer a personal response which is grounded in aspects of how film language is used and make good points about the conjunction of style with substance.

Overall, this is a comprehensive analysis in response to the question set. There is comprehensive analysis of relevant examples from the chosen film. The argument presented is well-developed and the information presented is entirely relevant and substantiated.

Even better if: Some further use of examples from the films would be helpful to further develop points made about realism.

Mark awarded 32/35: This excellent response clearly fits the criteria for Level 5 – comprehensive analysis of relevant examples.

AO1 14/15, AO2 18/20

Exemplar 2 – Level 3 answer, 18 marks

Whether or not the power of a documentary relies on techniques that make it feel real and truthful depends on the type of documentary it is. I am going to be writing about the documentary 'Citizenfour' (Poitras, 2014), whose power comes from the use of film techniques but also partly from the subject matter.

'Citizenfour' mixes the expository and observational styles of documentary. It is an expository documentary because it directly addresses its audiences through the off-screen narration. This first person approach means that this is not pretending to be a fly on the wall documentary where the role of the filmmaker is hidden from the audience. It is also an observational documentary as it follows Snowden during the days he spent in a hotel in Hong Kong.

There are a range of techniques that the film uses to convey a sense of reality. The film begins by showing us the context of Snowden's revelations. The filmmakers use actuality footage from a range of settings telling the audience about the NSA's data collection activities. These include different speakers giving presentations about the NSA's activities, an Arizona court case focused on citizens who are attempting to find out why the government has been intercepting their emails, and footage of buildings which are part of the NSA's data farms. There is also actuality footage of a senior military officer testifying to the US Congress, denying that American agencies do the type of data harvesting which Snowden exposes. All of these elements use footage from public sources, rather than footage filmed specifically for the documentary. This lends credibility to the position of Poitras and Snowden, reinforcing the claim made in the statement in the question.

The film often shows emails and messages between Poitras and Snowden on screen, with the text then being encrypted into random symbols, which demonstrates the concerns about privacy and security shared by Snowden and the filmmakers. This technique contributes to the power of the documentary by visualising the key themes.

Most of the film is set in Snowden's hotel room in Hong Kong. During these scenes 'shaky cam' is often used. This is a technique which is used to create a sense of realism by making it feel like you are there.

At one point in the hotel sequence there is a fire drill in the hotel, and we are shown Snowden's sense of fear as he questions what the real reason behind the fire alarms is. A range of techniques including the camera, the use of voiceover and music, and the different locations are used carefully to create a sense that what is being portrayed is real, and heighten the sense of paranoia.

Overall, film techniques are of great importance in helping a documentary make its point. Without a well thought-out approach to the use of film language, it will be hard to make an engaging documentary.

Examiner commentary

An adequate demonstration of knowledge and understanding of elements of film. A mostly relevant and appropriate response to the question set. A mostly accurate knowledge with adequate breadth or depth of material used.

An adequate response that offers some relevant analysis and use of critical approaches in response to the question set. The line of reasoning is presented with some structure, and supported by generally relevant evidence.

What went well: The candidate has an adequate knowledge and understanding of the chosen film and of the issues raised by the question. The candidate is able to adequately respond to these issues. Given this, the response is an appropriate one.

Overall, the candidate offers an adequate demonstration of knowledge and understanding of elements of film. A line of reasoning is presented with some structure. The information presented is in the most-part relevant and supported by some evidence.

Even better if: If the candidate had sought to frame their response as a more a two-sided debate seeking to weigh how much film language elements contribute to the impact of a documentary versus others factors such as style, subject matter, 'star power' (such as can accrue from Michael Moore documentaries) this would have enabled a more sophisticated response.

Mark awarded 18/35. As a mid Level 3, this response shows an adequate demonstration of knowledge and understanding of elements of film and is a mostly relevant and appropriate response to the question set. It shows a mostly accurate knowledge with adequate breadth or depth of material used.

AO1 8/15, AO2 10/20

SECTION C QUESTION 5

SECTION C – Ideology

Answer **one** question from Questions 5 - 10

You should have studied films from **one** of the following themes:

- Family and Home
- Outsiders
- Conflict

If you have studied films from the theme **Family and Home**, answer **either** Question 5 **or** Question 6.

If you have studied films from the theme **Outsiders**, answer either Question 7 **or** Question 8.

If you have studied films from the theme **Conflict**, answer **either** Question 9 **or** Question 10.

Theme: Family and Home

Answer **either** Question 5 **or** Question 6

You should have studied **three** films from your chosen theme. One film should be from the **US Independent** list, one film should be from the **Non-US English Language** list and one film should be from the **Non-European Non-English Language** list below.

US Independent	Non-US English Language	Non-European Non-English Language
<i>Moonrise Kingdom</i> (2012). Directed by Wes Anderson. USA, 12	<i>Room</i> (2015). Directed by Lenny Abrahamson. Canadian/Irish, 15	<i>A Separation</i> (2011). Directed by Asghar Farhadi. Iran, PG
<i>The Tree of Life</i> (2011). Directed by Terrence Malick. USA, 12	<i>Animal Kingdom</i> (2010). Directed by David Michod. Australia, 15	<i>Our Little Sister</i> (2015). Directed by Hirokazu Koreeda. Japan, PG

'The idea of family and home is always presented as a safe place.' Discuss how far this is true in the films you have studied. You must draw comparisons between the **three** films you have studied in your answer.

[35]

Exemplar 1 – Level 5 answer, 32 marks

The films I will be discussing are 'Moonrise Kingdom' (Anderson, 2012), 'Room' (Abrahamson, 2015) and 'A Separation' (Farhadi, 2011). I will be seeking to demonstrate that the ideas of family and home being a safe place physically and emotionally is not quite the case in any of the films I have studied.

Right from the beginning of 'Moonrise Kingdom' the audience is warned not to expect a happy film as we are told the action starts three days before a great storm hits the region. With this information, we can guess that a bad turn of events awaits the characters. This is certainly true - both physically and emotionally. The main protagonist of the film is a boy called Sam, who we quickly learn has been orphaned by the death of his parents and has consequently been labelled as 'emotionally disturbed'. When Sam disappears from a scout trip in the first Act, and his foster father is informed by the policeman, Captain Sharp, of the boy's disappearance, the foster father replies that Sam is not welcome to return to their house, for the reasons given above. This is the first clear sign the film offers that family and home are not necessarily places of safety for Sam. Ideally, most people would view the role of a parent as a nurturing one, but this emotional safety is clearly denied to Sam at this point.

As the film's narrative progresses, we are offered glimpses into the home and social life of Suzy, who forms something of a boyfriend-girlfriend relationship with Sam. Early in the film we see Suzy seemingly isolated in her bedroom, not engaging with her siblings, and gradually the narrative unfolds to present us with the plan that Sam and Suzy had concocted to meet up and run away together. With each other, Sam and Suzy find emotional bonding and security, which neither of them have or feel that they have in their home lives. So they run away and into the onrushing weather storm, which presents extreme physical dangers and challenges for them to navigate from one location to another. They aren't able to enjoy physical safety, but they do get emotional safety together, in a way creating a 'home' for themselves during the brief time they spend on the beach, which they name Moonrise Kingdom.

'Room' is a fictional film with some overtones of real life cases. It features a boy and his mother who live in captivity - in a shed, known to the 5-year-old boy simply as Room. The boy has been born into this captivity, while the film reveals that the mother has been held captive for 7 years since she was abducted off the streets at the age of 17. Their captor is a middle aged man who they only know as 'Old Nick' - a deliberate reference to the nickname for the devil. It is a fitting name for this character who has held them captive and regularly sexually abuses the young woman, Joy. Given that we learn that Joy has been held captive for 7 years, while the boy is 5, it is an unspoken message that 'Old Nick' is the boy's father.

At night times, the boy is made to sleep in the wardrobe, so that he cannot see the abuse that his mother has to endure. While the film is never graphic, it does enough with what is shown to the audience and the information that is revealed through the narrative and through micro-elements of film language to make clear that the normal routines of Joy and Jack are completely hideous, all the more so because Jack clearly doesn't know any different than this life of captivity and abuse. Clearly home and family can be seen as anything but a safe place, though at the same Jack's mother does do everything she can in the circumstances to keep Jack safe and provide stability.

Ultimately, Joy is able to develop a plan which enables Jack to escape and this is quickly followed by the police rescuing Joy. After a short stay in hospital, they are all set to go 'home' - back to Joy's parents' house. However, things have changed in the 7 years that Joy has been away - her parents have now split up and her mother has a new partner - these are big emotional shocks for Joy to adapt to, so going home is not quite as easy as she perhaps thought it would be. Having gone from the captivity of Room to 'home', they have exchanged the danger of Room for an uncertain situation at home. Upon their release, the stresses of the life in captivity begin to tell in Joy and Jack's behaviour. For Joy, this culminates in a suicide bid after taking part in a gruelling TV interview filmed in the supposed safety of her home. So for the greater part of the film, home and family are not certain places of safety. After her suicide bid, Joy seems to spend some time away, presumably in a hospital recovering from aspects of the ordeal of Room and the aftermath. As the film works to its close, some chinks of light shine through - we see Jack playing outside with another local boy as his mother returns to enjoy such moments of ordinariness, as we are presented with a close up of her smiling as she observes the two boys playing. In both 'Moonrise Kingdom' and 'Room', the idea of family and home is initially represented ambiguously, whether it be in the form of Sam's rejection from his foster family or Susie's alienation from her own family, or the way in which 'Room' provides a warped version of the home for Joy and Jack. However both films end with a more optimistic vision of the family and home; Sam has been adopted by Captain Sharp in Moonrise Kingdom, and Joy and Jack begin to adapt to family life at home in 'Room'. So, while for much of both films family and home is frequently anything but a safe place, the narrative closure offers a more positive view of the home.

In 'A Separation', we move from films and characters set in America to Iran. The tensions we see in many countries between genders and between different social classes quickly exert themselves here. As in the previous two films

discussed, the family and home is the source of narrative conflict, rather than a place of safety. The film centres on a family where the wife and husband are in the process of marriage breakdown - the opening of the film is a type of courtroom setting where the wife is presenting her case to the judge for reasons to separate and divorce from her husband. In the middle of this dispute is their daughter, Termeh. With the mother's departure from the family home, the bonds of family have unravelled, so here again in this film we have another situation where family and home are not places of physical or emotional safety.

This lack of safety is exacerbated by the health condition of Termeh's grandfather, who is suffering from Alzheimer's and is now unable to look after himself. Nader, the husband, arranges for a carer to come in to the home to look after the grandfather while he is at work. However, this is physically risky for the carer as she is pregnant and there is a lot of heavy lifting involved. By mistake, she leaves the front door to the apartment open, and the grandfather goes out into the street, into the middle of the busy passing traffic. Razieh, the carer, has to go out and rescue him. We find out later that in this process, she got hit by a car, which was the probable cause of the miscarriage which steers most of the narrative of the film. Razieh initially tries to stop doing the job and instead recommends her husband take it, as he needs the money as he is being put in prison regularly because of his debts. Hojjat, Razieh's husband refuses on the grounds he is not being paid enough so Razieh again goes back to work for Nader, setting in motion the tragedy of the loss of her baby.

The loss of the baby provokes a court case where Nader is being sued for 'blood money' compensation. The process of this case and the debates and arguments it unleashes in family homes peels away at the layers of the relationships between both couples and we become under no illusion as to the lack of emotional safety in both homes and lack of physical safety for Razieh in her home. As with the other two films, family and home are clearly not presented as a safe place. The film concludes with Termeh in court having to decide which of her parents she will live with, and the final shot of the film is of her parents separated by a glass partition in a corridor and standing on either side of the corridor, with no firm conclusion as to Termeh's final decision. So, the film doesn't allow us the emotional closure of knowing what her choice was, leaving us with the emotional unease of being in this in between position. This contrasts with the sense of home and family established at the end of 'Moonrise Kingdom' and 'Room'.

As stated in the introduction, I was seeking to demonstrate that in each of these three films, family and home are not places of safety. Whether that is in contemporary Iran as seen in 'A Separation', contemporary America as we see in 'Room' or a heightened stylised version of 1960s America that we see in 'Moonrise Kingdom', the message comes through again and again. Home is not necessarily a place, but a state of mind.

Examiner commentary

What went well: The candidate has a very clear knowledge and understanding of the chosen films. They offer a number of points about all three films, so this is a clearly relevant, sustained and sophisticated response. The range of points made across each film gives a rich breadth and depth to the argument presented. In the course of the answer, there is a high frequency of film terminology, which is all accurately used.

Overall, the candidate offers a very comprehensive response with direct comparison between the three films. There is a well-developed and detailed line of reasoning which is coherent and logically structured. The information presented is entirely relevant and substantiated.

Even better if: Some further use of examples from the films in discussion of micro-elements would be helpful to further substantiate the points made.

Mark awarded 32/35. This excellent response clearly fits the criteria for Level 5 – comprehensive analysis of relevant examples.

AO1 14/15, AO2 18/20

Exemplar 2 – Level 3 answer, 20 marks

The films I will be discussing are 'Moonrise Kingdom' (Anderson, 2012), 'Room' (Abrahamson, 2014) and 'A Separation' (Farhadi, 2011). I will be seeking to demonstrate that the idea that family and home are safe places is not quite the case in the films I have studied.

From the beginning of 'Moonrise Kingdom' the audience is warned to expect disaster as we are told the action starts three days before a storm hits the region, suggesting danger ahead for the characters. The main protagonist of the film is a boy called Sam, who has been orphaned by the death of his parents and labelled as 'emotionally disturbed'. His family and home is already lost before the film begins. When Sam disappears from a scout trip at the beginning of the film his foster father informs the police captain that Sam is not welcome to return to their house. This shows that family and home do not offer safety for Sam as he is rejected by the very people who are meant to be caring for him.

As the film's narrative progresses, we are shown glimpses of the home and social life of Suzy, who is Sam's girlfriend. Early in the film we see Suzy seemingly isolated in her bedroom, not engaging with her siblings. Suzy's home may be a place of physical safety, but it does not offer her the emotional safety of a caring environment. In the early parts of the film Suzy's parents are always shown to be in different parts of the house to the children, suggesting they are not involved in their lives. We are then shown Sam and Suzy following their plan to run away together. They are able to find security and a sense of belonging with each other, that they do not have in their home lives.

'Room' features a boy and his mother who live in captivity - in a shed, known to the 5 year old boy as Room. The boy has been born into this captivity, while the film reveals that the mother has been held captive for 7 years. Their captor is a man who they only know as 'Old Nick', who is the boy's father. The home and family is obviously not represented as a place of safety.

At night times, the boy is made to sleep in the wardrobe, so that he cannot see the abuse that his mother has to endure. The narrative and micro-elements of film language make clear that the normal routines of Joy and Jack are completely hideous, all the more so because Jack clearly doesn't know any different than this life of captivity and abuse, showing that home is anything but a safe place for the boy and his mother. In both 'Room' and 'Moonrise Kingdom' the family and home do not offer safety to the main characters, although Joy is shown to be a more caring parental figure than the parents in 'Moonrise Kingdom'.

Later in the film Joy develops a plan which allows Jack to escape and this is quickly followed by the police rescuing Joy. After a stay in hospital, they go 'home' - back to Joy's parents' house. However, things have changed in the 7 years that Joy has been away - her parents have now split up and her mother has a new partner - these are big emotional shocks for Joy to adapt to, so going home is not quite as easy as she perhaps thought it would be. Having gone from the captivity of Room to 'home' they have exchanged the danger of Room for an uncertain situation at home.

After her suicide bid, Joy seems to spend some time away recovering from aspects of the ordeal of Room and the aftermath. As the film works to its close, some more hopeful elements emerge - we see Jack playing outside with another local boy as his mother returns to enjoy such moments of ordinary life, we see a close up of her smiling as she watches the two boys playing outside, suggesting home may become a place of safety for Joy and Jack.

In 'A Separation', we move from films and characters set in America to Iran. The film centres on a family where the wife and husband are in the process of marriage breakdown. In the middle of this dispute is their daughter, Termeh. With the mother's departure from the family home, the bonds of family break, so here again in this film we have another situation where family and home are not places of a safety.

This lack of safety is worsened by the ill health of Termeh's grandfather, who is suffering from Alzheimer's and is now unable to look after himself. Nader, the husband, arranges for a carer to come in to the home to look after the grandfather while he is at work. However, this is physically risky for her as she is pregnant. By mistake, she leaves the front door to the apartment open, and the grandfather goes out into the street, into the middle of the passing traffic. Razieh, the carer, has to go out and rescue him. We find out later that when doing this she got hit by a car, which was the probable cause of the miscarriage which drives most of the narrative of the film. Razieh initially tries to stop doing the job and instead recommends her husband take it. Hojjat, Razieh's husband, refuses on the grounds he is not being paid enough so Razieh again goes back to work for Nader, setting in motion the tragic narrative.

The loss of the baby provokes a court case where Nader is being sued for 'blood money' compensation. The process of this case and the debates and arguments it unleashes in family homes leaves no illusion as to the lack of emotional safety in both homes and lack of physical safety for Razieh in her home, a theme found in the other two films.

As stated in the introduction, I was seeking to demonstrate that in each of these three films, family and home are not represented as places of safety.

Examiner commentary

What went well: The candidate has a clear knowledge and understanding of the chosen films. They offer a number of points about all three films, providing a relevant response.

Overall, the candidate offers an adequate response with adequate analysis of each of the three films.

Even better if: Some further use of examples from each of the films and further discussion of the micro-elements would be helpful to further substantiate the argument offered. Further direct comparison of the three films would be beneficial.

Mark awarded 20/35: The response clearly fits the criteria for Level 3 - adequate analysis of the chosen films.

AO1 9/15, AO2 11/20

QUESTION 7

Theme: Outsiders

Answer **either** Question 7 or Question 8

You should have studied **three** films from your chosen theme. One film should be from the **US Independent** list, one film should be from the **Non-US English Language** list and one film should be from the **Non-European Non-English Language** list below.

US Independent	Non-US English Language	Non-European Non-English Language
<i>A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night</i> (2014). Directed by Ana Lily Amirpour. USA, 15	<i>The Babadook</i> (2014). Directed by Jennifer Kent. Australia, 15	<i>Yojimbo (The Bodyguard)</i> (1961). Directed by Akira Kurosawa, Japan, PG
<i>Elephant</i> (2003). Directed by Gus Van Sant. USA, 15	<i>The Piano</i> (1993). Directed by Jane Campion. New Zealand, 15	<i>Y Tu Mama Tambien</i> (2001). Directed by Alfonso Cuarón. Mexico, 18

Discuss how far the spectator is encouraged by the filmmaker to identify with the outsider(s) in the films you have studied. You must draw comparisons between the **three** films you have studied in your answer.

[35]

Exemplar 1 – Level 5 answer, 30 marks

I am going to be arguing that are differences in the films I have studied as to how far the spectator is being asked to identify with the outsider characters. The films I have studied are 'Elephant' (Van Sant, 2003), The Babadook (Kent, 2014) and Yojimbo (Kurosawa, 1961). In 'Elephant' there is a mixture of elements where to some degree the spectator is being invited to identify with the outsider; in 'The Babadook' the spectator is very firmly invited to identify with the outsider characters and Yojimbo, like 'Elephant' is somewhat mixed.

'Elephant' is an independent, non-studio film and it very much shows in the style and structure of the film. It doesn't feature a conventional narrative structure with an easily identifiable hero facing clearly defined obstacles which must be overcome in order to complete a voyage of self-discovery, which is what happens in most films of any genre. Instead the film unfolds more like a documentary on high school life, identifying some key characters for the spectator to engage with and follow through the film. For the first half of the film, much of our focus is on the characters of Alex and Eric, and much of what we see for the first hour of the film is fairly mundane - boys at school and aspects of their normal school lives. For any spectator watching the film who is or has been at secondary school, there is much to see as normal, to identify with. Things take something of a funny turn when one of the characters practises piano for an extended period (not unusual in itself, but fairly unusual in a film), then we see the characters playing a video game which involves shooting people, and then the two boys shower together and begin to kiss. After that, the boys start to enact the plan that has been hinted at previously. They go on a shooting rampage at the school, shooting indiscriminately at anyone who crosses their path.

While we have come to understand something of the nature of the relationship between the two boys, the motivations for the mass shooting remain unclear. Both boys are outsiders - that is clear from the nature of their interactions with others - but exactly why they decided to embark on a mass school shooting is unknown. Whilst some possible motives

could be suggested, such as their treatment by others, the film refuses to give a firm answer, which arguably works against audience identification.

The documentary style, and the ensuing slow pace of the film, act as devices which prevent the spectator from engaging too readily with the outsider characters. On one level, you know you are watching a fiction film which is behaving like a factual film, thus triggering this distancing. Also, the lack of a typical narrative throws the spectator off-balance; the film simply doesn't feel like a more mainstream film and the main characters never behave like hero characters. Finally, the fairly abrupt shift from playing video games to going and shooting at people in the school acts as another brake on being able to identify with the characters.

By contrast, 'The Babadook's' main characters of Amelia and Samuel are easy to identify with, as we experience the story of the film entirely from their perspective, and particularly that of Amelia, which is very different to the focus on a range of different characters in *Elephant*. We are quickly told that Amelia's husband died in a car accident while taking her to hospital to have their son, Samuel. This instantly provokes sympathy from the spectator. Plus, the difficulties she is having with Samuel and his behaviour further arouse spectator sympathy.

When Amelia first reads the story *The Babadook*, we are given first person perspective shots of the frightening content of the book, therefore fully understand Amelia's decision to stop reading it, and with that we can understand why the book was able to capture Samuel's imagination and attention. The camerawork here encourages audience identification with the characters, and contrasts with the detached way in which Alex and Eric are represented in *Elephant*. We witness at first-hand Amelia's increasingly desperate and unsuccessful attempt to sleep and get some rest from Samuel's demanding behaviour. So when the threat of the Babadook haunting her becomes clearer, we have even more reasons to empathise with Amelia. Most of the action in the film is centred on these two outsider characters and most of the events happen in their house, so there is a very close relationship between the characters and the spectator, which also emphasises their isolation from the wider community. For me, this did loosen slightly at the end when it becomes apparent that the Babadook is now some kind of unwitting pet kept in the basement of the house, being fed on worms. While it was good to see Amelia and Samuel approaching happiness and normality again, this just feels a little odd given the events of the film as a whole.

Having watched 'Yojimbo' after watching some Clint Eastwood western films, it is hard to miss some of the similarities and this has affected how I have responded to the film. In a few ways, this film reminds me of the Clint Eastwood film 'High Plains Drifter' which features a loner, an outsider who rides into town to save the town from itself. The same is somewhat true in 'Yojimbo' where 'the bodyguard' of the title arrives in town, seemingly liked and trusted by no-one, yet manages to help restore some kind of moral order to the town by the close of the film. To some extent, *Yojimbo* fits the mould of the lone hero found in westerns, which may encourage audience identification, in contrast to the absence of a clear hero in *Elephant*. The film features quite a bit of martial arts style fighting which doesn't particularly engage me, but may make some viewers more involved. Plus, it being in black and white, watching in the 21st century, it was hard not to be a bit disengaged.

In the film itself, *Yojimbo's* lack of physical proximity to other characters is noticeable - there always seems to be a fair amount of physical distance between him and others; he is alone in many shots and in shots where he appears with other characters, there is usually quite a bit of physical space between him and them. This emphasises the sense of him being an outsider, and contrasts with the way camerawork worked to encouraged audience identification in *The Babadook*. None of the characters seem entirely sure what to make of the mysterious samurai and what he wants. This suspicion arising from some of the film's characters seeps into the spectator. So, in some ways, *Yojimbo* is held at a distance as Alex and Eric are in 'Elephant'.

'The Babadook' features the most conventional narrative structure and this is the film which offers the most engaging characters for the spectator to identify with, especially when compared to the other two films - so this is the key reason enabling or disabling spectator identification with the characters and their fictional lives.

Examiner commentary

A comprehensive demonstration of knowledge and understanding of elements of film. A clearly relevant, sustained and sophisticated response to the set question. A comprehensive understanding demonstrated through the level of breadth and depth of material used. Use of film terminology is highly relevant and accurate.

A comprehensive response that offers sophisticated and confident analysis and evaluation in response to the question set. There is comprehensive analysis of the chosen films, and how micro-elements are used in the films; comprehensive use of the different critical approaches to film and effective comparison between the chosen films. This is integrated throughout the response and placed in context. There is a well-developed and detailed line of reasoning which is coherent and substantiated.

What went well: The candidate has a very clear knowledge and understanding of the chosen films. They offer a number of points about all three films, so this a clearly relevant, sustained and sophisticated response. The range of points made across each film gives a rich breadth and depth to the argument presented. In the course of the answer, there is a high frequency of film terminology, which is all accurately used.

Overall, the candidate offers a very comprehensive response with direct comparison between the three films. There is a well-developed and detailed line of reasoning which is coherent and logically structured. The information presented is entirely relevant and substantiated.

Even better if: The discussion of 'Elephant' and 'The Babadook' is strongest - some further detail for 'Yojimbo' would be ideal.

Mark awarded 30/35: The excellent response fits the criteria for Level 5 – overall, it offers a comprehensive analysis of relevant examples.

AO1 13/15, AO2 17/20

Exemplar 2 – Level 3 answer, 17 marks

I am going to be arguing that it is quite mixed in the films I have studied how far the spectator is being asked to identify with the outsider characters. The films I have studied are 'Elephant' (Van Sant, 2003), The Babadook (Kent, 2014) and Yojimbo (Kurosawa, 1961).

'Elephant' is an independent film which doesn't have a conventional narrative structure. Instead the film works more like a documentary showing different parts of high school life, identifying some key characters for the spectator to follow through the film. For the first half of the film, the focus is mostly on the characters of Alex and Eric, and much of what we see for the first hour of the film is quite everyday, showing the normal school life of the boys. For any spectator watching the film who is or has been at secondary school this helps them identify with the situations and characters. Things become less mundane when there is an extended sequence of one of the characters practicing piano (which is unusual to show at such length in a film) then we see the characters playing a violent video game, then the two boys shower together and begin to kiss. After that, the boys put into practice the plan that has been hinted at earlier. They go on a shooting rampage at the school, shooting indiscriminately at anyone who crosses their path.

While we have come to have some understanding of the nature of the relationship between the two boys, their motive for the mass shooting remain unclear. Both boys are outsiders, which is shown from their interactions with others. But the film does not give a clear answer as to why they decided to carry out a mass school shooting.

The documentary style is quite boring and prevents the spectator from understanding the outsider characters. The fairly quick shift from playing video games to going and shooting people in the school also discourages the spectator from identifying with the characters.

By contrast, 'The Babadook's' main characters of Amelia and Samuel are easy to identify with, as the film is seen from their perspective, and particularly that of Amelia. We are told that Amelia's husband died in a car accident taking her to hospital to have their son, Samuel which creates sympathy from the spectator. Plus, the difficulties she is having with Samuel and his behaviour further arouse sympathy.

When Amelia first reads the story The Babadook, we are given camera shots of the frightening content of the book, and so understand Amelia's decision to stop reading it, and also how the book was able to capture Samuel's imagination. We see Amelia's increasingly desperate attempt to sleep and rest from Samuel's demanding behaviour, but with no luck. So when the threat of the Babadook haunting her becomes clearer, we have even more reasons to empathise with Amelia. Most of the action in the film is centred on these two outsider characters and most of the events happen in their house, so there is a very close relationship between the characters and the spectator.

Having watched 'Yojimbo' after having watched some Clint Eastwood western films, they are quite similar and this has affected how I have responded to the film. The film features a loner who rides into town to save it, with 'the bodyguard' of the title arriving in town, seemingly liked and trusted by no-one, yet managing to help restore some kind of order to the town by the end.

In the film itself, there always seems to be a fair amount of physical distance between Yojimbo and other characters. He is quite often alone in many shots and in shots where he appears with other characters, there is usually quite a bit of physical space between him and them. None of the characters seem entirely sure what to make of the mysterious samurai, and what he wants. This suspicion arising from some of the film's characters seeps into the spectator. So, in some ways, Yojimbo is held at a distance like Alex and Eric in 'Elephant'.

'The Babadook' features the most conventional narrative structure and this is the film which offers the most engaging characters for the spectator to identify with, especially when compared to the other two films.

Examiner commentary

What went well: The candidate has a mostly clear knowledge and understanding of the chosen films. They offer relevant points about all three films. In the course of the answer, there is accurate use of film terminology. Overall, the candidate offers an adequate response.

Even better if: The discussion is strongest of 'Elephant' and 'The Babadook' - some further detail for 'Yojimbo' would be helpful. In addition more use of examples from the chosen film would allow for greater breadth and depth of argument to emerge. More direct comparison of the three films would also allow for a more developed response.

Mark awarded 17/35: This response fits the criteria for Level 3 - overall, offers an adequate analysis.

AO1 7/15, AO2 10/20

QUESTION 10

Theme: Conflict

Answer **either** Question 9 **or** Question 10

You should have studied **three** films from your chosen theme. One film should be from the **US Independent** list, one film should be from the **Non-US English Language** list and one film should be from the **Non-European Non-English Language** list below.

US Independent	Non-US English Language	Non-European Non-English Language
<i>The Hurt Locker</i> (2008). Directed by Kathryn Bigelow. USA, 15	<i>District 9</i> (2009). Directed by Neil Blomkamp. South Africa 2009, 15	<i>Battle of Algiers</i> (1965). Directed by Gillo Pontecorvo. Algeria, 15
<i>Whiplash</i> (2015). Directed by Damien Chazelle. USA, 15	<i>Mad Max</i> (1979). Directed by George Miller. Australia, 15	<i>The Grandmaster</i> (2013). Directed by Wong Kar-Wai. China, 15

Discuss the ways micro-elements of film are used to represent conflict and shape spectator response in the films you have studied. You must draw comparisons between the **three** films you have studied in your answer.

[35]

Exemplar 1 – Level 5 answer, 33 marks

I will be exploring how conflict is represented and spectator response shaped in 'The Battle of Algiers' (Pontecorvo, 1966), 'The Hurt Locker' (Bigelow, 2008) and 'District 9' (Blomkamp, 2009) and looking to compare the similarities and differences between the two films.

The opening fifteen minutes of 'The Battle of Algiers' work to very effectively represent conflict and start shaping spectator response. The film begins in 1957 where an Algerian prisoner has now evidently been 'broken' after undergoing torture at the hands of his French captors. The prisoner appears badly disoriented, confused and dishevelled. He is mocked by one of the French soldiers, to add further to his humiliation. Even without having any contextual knowledge of the history of French Algeria and the conflict between Algerian rebels and the French military, it would be difficult not to feel some sympathy for this man. Add in this contextual knowledge and it quickly becomes impossible not to feel for his plight. Spectator response is crafted through the range of micro-elements; the *mise-en-scène* through the appearance of the Algerian man - the way the actors are blocked to put the Algerian prisoner very much at the centre of attention and at the mercy of the soldiers. Also the camera is used in an observatory, fly on the wall style which gives the film the feel of a documentary, adding to a sense of realism. In relation to the representation of conflict, the difference between the French and the Algerians in both numbers and weapons symbolises the difference in physical strength of both sides - putting the Algerian rebels of the FLN as very much the underdogs.

What is not immediately clear is why any of this is happening, other than that the French are trying to find the whereabouts of a rebel, Ali La Pointe. As the film then hops back in time to 1954 (the year which saw the conflict escalate beyond control, and also the year that the French suffered the end of their empire in South-eastern Asia with their infamous defeat at Dien Bien Phu in Vietnam), we get to see something of Algiers the place. An aerial shot shows

us a clear contrast between the narrow, crowded streets of the Casbah (where the native Algerians lived in ghetto-like conditions) versus the wide open boulevards of the European Quarter. In between the Casbah and the European Quarter is a very long wall. Watching this film through 21st century eyes, it is impossible not to recognise the overlaps to other conflicts such as Iraq, where the Americans had built a walled-off zone - the Green Zone - to separate themselves from the Iraqis. Also, a divisive wall separates Palestinian lands from Israeli occupied/settler areas. What spectator response is being pointed towards is the very sharp differences and lesser status of the Algerians in their own land versus the more privileged lives the inhabitants of the European Quarter can live – thus the context to understand the campaign of the FLN as a national liberation struggle and not simply as mindless terrorism is set.

The narrative of *The Hurt Locker* is structured around the countdown to the end of Bravo Company's tour of duty in Iraq. The film picks up at the point where Bravo Company have 30 days remaining – which is the point where American soldiers have historically begun to describe themselves as 'short'. The first key event in the film ends with the death of bomb disposal expert Sergeant Thompson, so the audience get a very clear and early demonstration of the risks that the troops placed in such positions face on a daily basis. The audience is positioned to see this representation of the world through American eyes – as all of the events of the film position Bravo Company at the centre of everything. In terms of shaping spectator response, this is crucial – the moral rights and wrongs of the American-led invasion and occupation of Iraq are set aside in favour of a story which sees the conflict from the position of soldiers on the ground who are not asked for their political opinions about the legitimacy of the American presence, unlike the focus on the ideological dimensions of the conflict in *The Battle of Algiers*.

With the early death of Sergeant Thompson – played by Guy Pearce, one of the biggest name actors in the film – the audience very quickly learns that no-one is safe. So, when the brash and arrogant Sergeant James (this has been made clear to us through his removal of the protective covering against mortars in his accommodation, against the advice of the cautious and serious-minded Sergeant Sanborn) joins Bravo Company to replace Thompson, and is very quickly placed in a life or death situation trying to defuse a car bomb, the audience would be right to feel somewhat nervous. This is enhanced as James seems to have a lack of concern for his own safety – taking off his safety helmet, throwing a smoke bomb which stops the soldiers protecting him from being able to offer protective cover and putting down his radio thus breaking off means of communicating with his team. With the foreknowledge of the horrible death of Thompson, the audience holds its breath, but James survives and defuses the bomb successfully. With the narrative device of the countdown of Bravo Company's tour ticking down and seeing the success of the maverick approach of James, the audience comes to believe, that against the odds, Bravo Company may now see out the rest of their tour without further incident. What this sequence of the film does is highlight the risks that these soldiers face and their bravery in doing so, offering the message that Americans soldiers are brave and seeking to do 'the right thing'. These are good guys in a bad situation, trying to help the Iraqi people. As there is no questioning of the moral rightness of the American presence and mission in Iraq, the film presents limited reflection on the wider social and cultural contexts. This can clearly be contrasted with *The Battle of Algiers* which sets out to use conflict to shape spectator response in relation to the political realities of the Algerian War, and the living conditions experienced by the Algerians.

The narrative of *District 9* is geared around how humans should and do treat a group of alien 'invaders' who have taken up long-term residence on the outskirts of Johannesburg, South Africa. Following the arrival of the aliens in the sky over Johannesburg, they are eventually housed in an area on the outskirts of the city – the District 9 of the film's title. This clearly echoes the segregation of the population in apartheid-era South Africa, where non-white citizens had to live in designated townships such as Soweto – whose full name is South West Township – an equally impersonal name as District 9. With the close overlap between the segregation between humans and non-humans in the film and the segregation of people in real-life South Africa, the political context is front and centre of the film's narrative. This political context is critical to shaping spectator response - given that this is a South African film, there might be an expectation of contextual knowledge. The ridiculousness of how the aliens are viewed and treated by the humans throws light on the racist approach implemented under the apartheid laws. Unlike *The Hurt Locker*, which does not explicitly engage with the ideological context, *District 9*, similarly to *The Battle of Algiers*, aims to shape spectator response in relation to the wider political contexts.

As part of the initial scene-setting in *District 9*, the film presents the audience with an overview of the aliens' lifestyle in District 9. The aliens are presented as lawless and drunks – destroying property and staggering around – causing a social nuisance for their human neighbours. The film's protagonist, Wikus, who is introducing the audience to the lives of the aliens, makes a remark about how this is part of the aliens' normal cultural practice and how they don't realise the impact that their actions have for their human neighbours. This is one of the main points where the film overtly and directly invites comparisons between the representation of the aliens and their social conditions to the social and cultural contexts of real world non-white South Africans in the apartheid era, where the non-white population were treated by the white minority as a problem which had to be managed in order to enable the continuity of business as normal in apartheid South Africa. The laughable nature of Wikus' condescending description of the cultural lives of the aliens

highlights the types of discriminatory attitudes which were part of official government policy in apartheid South Africa. The discriminatory and derogatory way the humans treat the aliens of District 9, such as trying to trick them to leave and relocate, gives us an insight into the representation of conflict, and the humans (allegorically speaking the white South Africans) are clearly represented as condescending and not as clever as they think they are. There is a definite similarity to the contrasting representation of the Casbah and the European Quarter in *The Battle of Algiers*, demonstrating how both films seek to shape spectator response in relation to the ideological messages focused on discrimination against another national/ethnic group.

So, to summarise, all three films are very firmly engaged in a process to shape spectator response and direct spectator sympathy towards one group over another in each film. One of the key ways this is done is through decisions about where to place the cameras and who to keep it close to; this is pivotal to generating spectator response and favouring one character and one side over another in each of these films and the conflicts they represent. The films offer a reflection of social and cultural contexts, albeit in different ways, through the narrative structure and aspects of the use of micro-elements.

Examiner commentary

What went well: The candidate has a very clear knowledge and understanding of the chosen films. The candidate demonstrates excellent contextual knowledge of South Africa, through being able to sustain a range of relevant points about social life in apartheid-era South Africa and, with regards to the Iraq war, an understanding of the moral dimension to the justness of the war. The candidate also possesses relevant knowledge of the political situation in Algeria in the 1950s and some understanding of the state of the French empire at the time (through reference to the French defeat in South-east Asia in 1954). The candidate clearly identifies that the films reflect their social and cultural contexts in very different ways and this argument is continually reinforced via the examples from the films provided. Overall, the candidate offers a very comprehensive response with direct comparison between the three films. The discussion of examples enables the candidate to express their knowledge of subject terminology.

Even better if: Some higher frequency in the use of technical terminology could be achieved and a little more exemplification of the use of micro-elements (for example, through more specific reference to use of camera positioning to shape spectator response within the individual films).

Mark awarded 33/35: This excellent response clearly fits the criteria for Level 5 - comprehensive analysis of relevant examples.

AO1 14/15, AO2 19/20

Exemplar 2 – Level 3 answer, 19 marks

I will be exploring how conflict is represented and spectator response shaped in *The Battle of Algiers* (Pontecorvo, 1966), *The Hurt Locker* (Bigelow, 2008) and *District 9* (Blomkamp, 2009).

The opening sequence of *'The Battle of Algiers'* uses conflict very effectively to shape spectator response. It begins with an Algerian prisoner who has been tortured by French soldiers. He appears to be very disorientated and dishevelled. The soldiers further humiliate him by mocking him. This immediately encourages the audience to sympathise with the Algerian prisoner, regardless of their awareness of the history of the conflict. Micro-elements are used to shape the spectator response, for example through the use of *mise-en-scène*, with the appearance of the Algerian prisoner and the use of blocking to emphasise the idea that he is subordinate to the French soldiers. The blocking also makes the prisoner the main focus of attention, which shapes the audience's response to be more sympathetic to the character. The use of the camera also creates a documentary feel which creates a sense of realism. The French soldiers are represented as more powerful than the Algerians, suggesting to the audience that the Algerians are the underdogs which might also shape the audience's response to them.

The narrative of *The Hurt Locker* focuses on the last thirty days of Bravo Company's tour of duty in Iraq. The first key event in the film ends with the death of bomb defuser Sergeant Thompson, making the danger faced by the soldiers on a daily basis very clear to the audience. This shapes the audience response to identify with the American soldiers. Throughout the film we are shown the soldiers in dangerous situations, with the use of micro-elements encouraging the audience to identify with them, for example through the use of point-of-view shots and the sound of breathing when Sergeant James walks towards the car bomb. This is further developed as throughout the film everything is from their perspective, encouraging the audience to identify with them. The Bravo Company are at the centre of all the narrative events. Because of this the film doesn't explore the legitimacy of the American-led invasion and occupation of Iraq, and no political opinions about this are asked for from the soldiers on the ground. This contrasts with the focus on the politics of the Algerian conflict in *Battle of Algiers*.

Conflict is important to shaping spectator response in *District 9*. The treatment of the aliens by the humans reflects the racism of the law in South Africa during the apartheid era. The film introduces the audience to the lifestyle of the aliens in *District 9*. They are shown to cause problems for their human neighbours as they destroy property and get drunk. Wikus, the protagonist of the film, describes this as being part of the aliens' normal cultural practices, and says that they don't realise the impact they have on their human neighbours. His patronising attitude to the aliens reflects the discrimination that was accepted as government policy in apartheid South Africa. The way in which the humans interact with aliens gives us a sense of the conflict between them, and shapes the spectator response to see the humans (who represent white South Africans) negatively. This is similar to the way *Battle of Algiers* represented the conflict between the French and the Algerians, with conflict being used to encourage the audience to more sympathetic to the group who are seen as the mistreated underdogs.

All three films represent conflict in different ways to shape the spectator response to be more sympathetic to a specific group. This is frequently done through the way the films show us characters' perspectives on the narrative events.

Examiner commentary

What went well: The candidate has a solid, adequate knowledge of the films and their contexts, showing signs of clarity of understanding of how context can affect reception. The candidate shows consistency of knowledge and understanding across the three films.

Overall, the candidate offers a mostly accurate knowledge with adequate breadth or depth of material used. The line of reasoning is presented with some structure. The information presented is in the most-part relevant and supported by some evidence.

Even better if: A wider range of examples from all three films would help to improve the effectiveness of the response through giving extra breadth and depth to the answer. More direct comparison of the chosen films would also be beneficial.

Mark awarded 19/35: The response clearly fits the criteria for Level 3 - adequate analysis of relevant examples.

AO1 8/15, AO2 11/20



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